

Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) #5

PUBLIC HEALTH HEAT EMERGENCY

UPDATED: 30 JANUARY 2019

A. Situation

1. The City of Houston is periodically subject to periods of excess heat, where the temperature reaches or exceeds 103 and/or the heat index reaches or exceeds 108 degrees for 2 or more consecutive days. Prolonged extreme heat may be deemed a public health heat emergency. This guideline will apply when the City of Houston experiences a public health heat emergency.
2. For this guideline, the following definitions will apply:
 - a. **Heat Advisory:** The National Weather Service (NWS) will issue a Heat Advisory for Houston when the temperature is forecast to reach or exceed 103 degrees or the heat index is forecast to reach or exceed 108 degrees.
 - b. **Excessive Heat Warning:** The National Weather Service will issue an Excessive Heat Warning for Houston when the temperature is forecast to reach or exceed 105 degrees, or the heat index is forecast to reach or exceed 113 degrees.
 - c. **Heat Index:** The "feels like" temperature when relative humidity is factored in with air temperature.
 - d. **Public Health Heat Emergency Plan:** Coordinated through the Heat Emergency Management Group. The plan establishes a citywide framework for the management of heat-related public health emergencies. (Currently in Draft)
 - e. **Heat Emergency Management Group:** A group comprised of the Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC), Houston Health Department (HHD) Director or designee, Public Health Authority, with assistance from the OEM Duty Officer, HHD Public Information Officer (PIO), and OEM PIO. This group is tasked with coordinating the City's response to a Public Health Heat Emergency.
 - f. **Cooling Center Coordination Group:** A group of agencies charged with coordinating the identification, activation, and demobilization of Cooling Centers in the City of Houston. These include: OEM, HHD, Houston 311 Help & Information (311), Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO), Houston Public Library (HPL), and Houston Parks & Recreation Department (HPARD).
 - g. **Heat Emergency Communication Group:** Comprised of the OEM Duty Officer, HHD Public Information Officer (PIO), and OEM PIO. This group is responsible for disseminating information regarding activation of the Public Health Heat Emergency Management Plan, Cooling Center coordination, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation, etc. The Communication Group should be included in all discussions relating to broader agency coordination and public information.

B. Special Considerations

1. The scope, impacts, and response to the incident may vary based on the following considerations:
 - a. Time/Day of onset (time of year, school vacations, local events)
 - b. Access & Functional Needs (AFN) populations within the City of Houston
 - c. Expected duration of event (hours per day, consecutive days)
 - d. Critical service or infrastructure impacts (HPD, EMS, water mains, etc.)

- e. Impact on City facilities open to the public (libraries, multiservice centers, etc.)
- f. Aggravating factors (power outages, air quality, combined weather events, other public health threats, etc.)

C. Notifications/Protective Actions

1. During a Public Health Heat Emergency, residents, departments, and employees should be advised to:
 - a. Monitor local weather information
 - b. Take the following protective actions:
 - 1) Seek shelter inside climate-controlled buildings
 - 2) Wear light weight/light colored clothing
 - 3) Drink plenty of fluids
 - 4) Check on vulnerable neighbors and family members, including individuals with access and/or functional needs
2. When the National Weather Service forecasts a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning that is expected to last 2 or more consecutive days:
 - a. The Duty Officer will notify the EMC, or acting EMC, via phone and/or email.
 - b. The EMC, or acting EMC, will notify the members of the Heat Emergency Management Group (HEMG) to determine if or when the City's Public Health Heat Emergency Plan will go into effect. Additional considerations by the HEMG and Cooling Center Coordination Group include:
 - 1) Identifying which facilities will be publicized as Cooling Centers, depending on the severity of the situation and forecasted time frame.
 1. Determine if extended hours and/or staffing are necessary
 2. Determine which facilities are to be designated drop-off points for people needing transportation assistance from METRO
 - 2) Coordinating with the Heat Emergency Communication Group regarding Cooling Centers and other pertinent public information.
3. When the HEMG activates the Public Health Heat Emergency Plan, the Duty Officer (DO) will assume the following responsibilities:
 - a. Continue to send Internal Alert messages for NWS advisories, watches, and/or warnings. In the event of repetitive advisories, watches, and warnings, the DO may elect to forego individual notifications and combine multiple advisory/ watch/ warning alerts into one consolidated alert. Internal Alert messages should include the following information:
 - 1) Specific hazardous condition(s)
 - 2) Protective action recommendations for City personnel and assets
 - 3) Additional information & instructions for planning and preparedness
 - b. Notify the following of the Plan's activation:
 - 1) OEM
 - 2) 311
 - 3) METRO/METRO Lift
 - 4) HPL
 - 5) HPARD
 - c. The Duty Officer will be prepared to brief the EMC/Acting EMC and PIO concerning details of the situation or incident as necessary. Additionally, DOs should coordinate with each other if the emergency extends multiple days.
 - d. The DO will maintain situational awareness of impacts to the City of Houston by maintaining contact with the following departments/agencies throughout the event:
 - 1) HHD – to capture ER visits and admissions for heat related emergencies
 - 2) METRO – to assess information regarding requests for transport, as well as any operational impacts to busses and light rail
 - 3) Other organizations/agencies as appropriate
 - e. If the response to a heat emergency escalates to include resource requests, cascading impacts, or involves additional city departments or stakeholders, the creation of a WebEOC incident may be necessary. The DO or WebEOC administrator will follow

guidelines for WebEOC incident creation as outlined in OEM Procedure #41 (WebEOC Incident Creation) and notify the EMC/Acting EMC.

4. When the HEMG activates the Public Health Heat Emergency Plan, the OEM PIO will coordinate with the HHD PIO to publicize and amplify public messaging for the City's Public Health Heat Emergency Plan, including protective actions, Cooling Center locations & hours, and information on obtaining a ride to a Cooling Center via 311 and METRO Lift.
5. If conditions warrant the activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to provide enhanced coordination, including increased resource assistance to affected departments, the EMC/ Acting EMC will refer to Annex N (Direction and Control) of the City's Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and OEM SOG 13 (EOC Activation).

D. Terminating Guideline

1. The actions outlined in this guideline will be terminated when the National Weather Service has cancelled or allowed a Heat Advisory and/or Excessive Heat Warning to expire.
2. The DO shall:
 - a. Contact all departments/ agencies engaged in additional activities supporting Cooling Center operations & transport and inform them they may suspend these operations.
3. The OEM PIO shall issue public messaging announcing the suspension of the Public Health Heat Emergency Plan and transportation assistance to designated Cooling Centers.

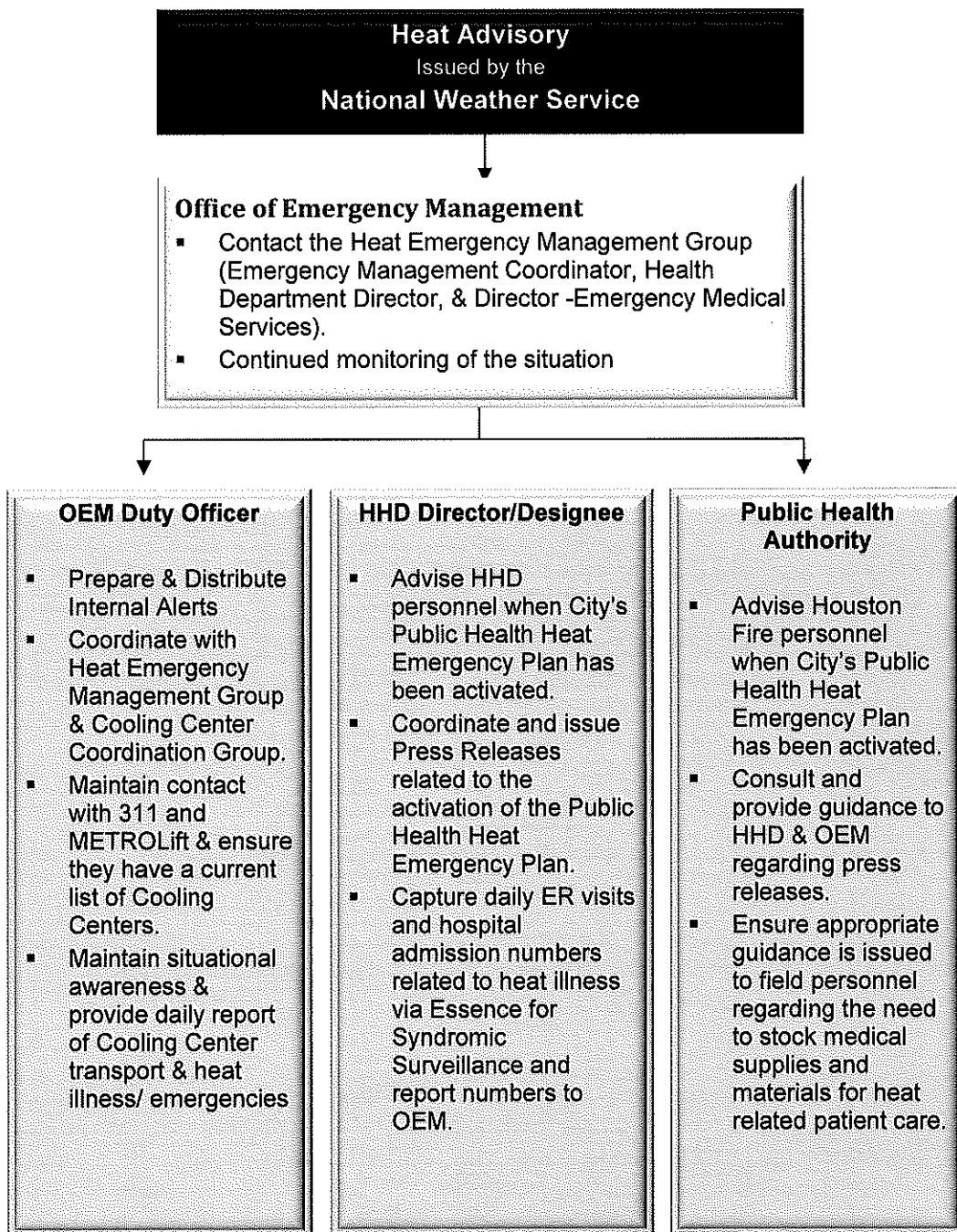
E. Recovery

If the City suffers extensive damage as a result a public health heat emergency, refer to Annex J (Recovery) of the City's EMP and the Disaster Assistance/Recovery Manual for activation of recovery and damage assessment operations.

Approved:	 Rick Flanagan, Emergency Management Coordinator	30 January 2019 Date Approved
-----------	--	----------------------------------

APPENDIX A: HEAT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Activation Flow Chart



Citizens Transportation Flow Chart

